



## YoungStar

### Frequently Asked Questions: Family Engagement and Wisconsin Shares

*February 5, 2016*

*Note: Almost all questions have been revised since June 10, 2013; questions that have been substantially revised or added since the last update are highlighted.*

YoungStar is a 5 Star quality rating and improvement system that supports child care and school-age care providers in the areas of education, learning environment & curriculum, business & professional practices and the health & well-being of children. Through this rating system the state addresses several key issues in Wisconsin's child care system. YoungStar:

- Focuses on improving outcomes for children by improving the overall quality of care
- Creates multiple pathways to professional development opportunities and better quality for child care and school-age programs
- Creates a clear, understandable tool for parents to choose quality child care
- Creates incentives and provides support for programs to improve services, particularly for low-income children
- Improves accountability for the Wisconsin Shares system

#### Questions Involving Families: Family Engagement and Wisconsin Shares

##### Family Engagement

*FAM-1. How are families informed about YoungStar?*

*FAM-2. What is posted about child care programs on the DCF child care search website, and how does this help families select child care?*

##### Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program

*SHARES-1. What is Wisconsin Shares, and how is it related to YoungStar?*

*SHARES-2. Do programs serving children who receive Wisconsin Shares have a choice about participating in YoungStar? Do programs participating in YoungStar have a choice about serving children who receive Wisconsin Shares?*

*SHARES-3. How do programs receive their Wisconsin Shares reimbursement adjustments?*

*SHARES-4. Do Wisconsin Shares tiered reimbursement adjustments affect the amount a program charges parents?*

*SHARES-5. When a program receives a reimbursement adjustment, are there specifications on how that money can be used?*

#### Answers Involving Families: Family Engagement and Wisconsin Shares

##### Family Engagement

***FAM-1. How are families informed about YoungStar?***

DCF works closely with partners to publicize YoungStar ratings using a variety of media in which families can learn about their child care options. The Department has also designed a website to assist those searching for child care or looking for more information on a specific child care program. The **Regulated Child Care and YoungStar Public Search** website provides detailed information about YoungStar ratings as well as compliance records for licensing and certification: <http://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov>

To serve families, DCF collaborates with a broad range of partners to ensure that families are equipped with concrete, objective information regarding quality child care. Some of these partners are:

- Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies: <http://supportingfamilies.together.org/child-care-resource-referral-agencies/>
- Family Resource Centers: [http://dcf.wi.gov/bmcw/family/resource\\_centers.htm](http://dcf.wi.gov/bmcw/family/resource_centers.htm)
- Parents Plus: <http://parentspluswi.org/>
- County Agencies: [http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/regional\\_operations/default.htm](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/regional_operations/default.htm)
- W-2 Programs: <http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/w2/directories.htm>
- Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.wiaap.org/>
- Job Centers: <http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory/>

The YoungStar marketing campaign also provides families with clear and consistent information about quality indicators in child care settings and about family involvement opportunities.

***FAM-2. What is posted about child care programs on the DCF child care search website, and how does this help families select child care?***

All regulated child care programs are listed on the website regardless of their participation in YoungStar. YoungStar participants also have detailed information provided about their star levels and the points they have earned in each of the four quality indicator areas during the YoungStar rating process. (In addition, families who receive Wisconsin Shares are notified periodically of their providers' ratings in YoungStar.)

Families selecting a YoungStar provider benefit from having objective ratings of licensed and certified child care programs, based on quality criteria that have been proven by research to indicate higher-quality programming and better outcomes for children.

### **Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program**

***SHARES-1. What is Wisconsin Shares, and how is it related to YoungStar?***

Wisconsin Shares is Wisconsin's child care subsidy program that helps families pay for child care. To receive Wisconsin Shares payments, providers must participate in YoungStar.

To promote quality in child care, Wisconsin ties the rate of Wisconsin Shares reimbursement to the level of child care quality (as indicated by the provider's star level) as follows:

- 5 Stars = Wisconsin Shares payments increased by 25%
- 4 Stars = Wisconsin Shares payments increased by 10%
- 3 Stars = Wisconsin Shares payments will remain the same
- 2 Stars = Wisconsin Shares payments decreased by 5%
- 1 Star = Provider is not eligible for Wisconsin Shares payments

**Note:** Any increase or decrease in Wisconsin Shares reimbursement rate due to the YoungStar rating is applied **after** the parent co-payment is taken out of the Wisconsin Shares payment.

Wisconsin Shares information and resources for parents and providers are provided at:

- YoungStar and Wisconsin Shares: [http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/wi\\_shares.htm](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/wi_shares.htm)
- “Wisconsin Shares” Child Care Subsidy Program:  
<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/wishares/default.htm>

***SHARES-2. Do programs serving children who receive Wisconsin Shares have a choice about participating in YoungStar? Do programs participating in YoungStar have a choice about serving children who receive Wisconsin Shares?***

In order to participate in Wisconsin Shares, child care programs ***must*** be in regulatory compliance and ***must*** participate in YoungStar. YoungStar ratings are thus ***required*** for all programs receiving Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies. If a program is in regulatory compliance, the program may choose to have a YoungStar Automated Rating. With an Automated Rating, a program would not receive an on-site observation, and the highest star level they could attain would be 2 Star.

Also, in order to participate in YoungStar, the program ***must*** agree to accept children who utilize Wisconsin Shares. Programs that sign a YoungStar Contract must be willing to:

- Accept children receiving Wisconsin Shares
- Comply with the contract they have signed with DCF and with Licensing/Certification
- Have an annual YoungStar rating

The YoungStar Contract lasts one year. During the contract period, the rating is published on the YoungStar public child care search website:

<http://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov>

Sometimes a program happens to have no children enrolled who receive Wisconsin Shares. These programs may *volunteer* to be rated through YoungStar, as long as they agree to accept any children utilizing Wisconsin Shares in the future.

A program may withdraw from YoungStar only if the program has not received any Wisconsin Shares payments within 6 months of its withdrawal request. If the program has received Wisconsin Shares payments within the last 6 months, the program cannot withdraw and must remain on the YoungStar public child care search website.

***SHARES-3. How do programs receive their Wisconsin Shares reimbursement adjustments?***

Wisconsin Shares tiered reimbursement adjustments are processed automatically and added to (or deducted from) the Wisconsin Shares check already being issued to providers. These adjustments are labeled as “YoungStar amount.”

***SHARES-4. Do Wisconsin Shares tiered reimbursement adjustments affect the amount a program charges parents?***

YoungStar does not regulate or direct provider prices or parent payments (whether a parent is making a private payment or a Wisconsin Shares co-payment), regardless of program ratings and corresponding tiered reimbursement adjustments. Programs are expected to continue to collect full family co-payments and can use their own discretion when choosing how to manage the increase or decrease in payments based on their YoungStar ratings. Increased reimbursement is intended to support higher quality programming.

As for prices, child care programs are owner-operated and determine their own fee structure. Programs should determine the actual business costs of providing the quality of care delivered. Funding sources should be reviewed, and costs should be prorated over the number of children being served. Marketing, business climate, eligibility for private funding sources, eligibility for public funding sources, and strategic planning are all things to consider in setting prices.

The YoungStar rating can be an important marketing tool for child care programs that have earned higher ratings, as parents are encouraged to choose programs that have demonstrated quality practices by earning points within YoungStar.

***SHARES-5. When a program receives a reimbursement adjustment, are there specifications on how that money can be used?***

No. The program may use the quality incentive payments as it sees fit.